

# Restoring Key Organic “Orphan” Farm Bill Programs

The organic sector is a vital part of American agriculture, with over 27,000 domestic operations serving the 80% of U.S. households that regularly purchase organic products. These farms contribute to environmental sustainability by protecting our soil, water, and natural resources, while also creating jobs and meeting the increasing consumer demand for organic products. However, the rising costs of organic certification pose a significant challenge for small and midsize domestic organic farmers, threatening their ability to compete and remain in the organic market.

## THE ORGANIC CERTIFICATION COST SHARE PROGRAM (OCCSP)

The OCCSP has been a crucial support system, helping farmers offset the substantial expenses associated with organic certification. This program allows farmers to enter and remain competitive in the organic market, ensuring consumer access to trusted, high-quality organic products. Unfortunately, as an “orphan program” without baseline funding in the last Farm Bill, the OCCSP was not included in the most recent Farm Bill extension. This lapse in funding, coupled with rising inflation and increasing certification costs, creates a severe financial burden for organic producers and processors. Without certification cost-share many farmers face prohibitive costs that could force them to abandon organic certification altogether.

## THE IMPACT OF LOSING OCCSP FUNDING

The loss of the OCCSP has a ripple effect throughout the organic sector:

- **Increased Costs for Farmers:** Farmers now bear the full cost of certification, making it significantly more challenging for them to maintain their organic status. This disproportionately affects small and midsize farms, which often operate on tighter margins.
- **Reduced Competitiveness:** Without cost-share assistance, American organic farmers struggle to compete with imported organic products, potentially leading to a decline in domestic organic production.
- **Loss of Economic Opportunity:** The organic sector is a source of jobs and economic growth in rural communities. The decline of organic farming would have a negative impact on these communities.



### CALL TO ACTION: RESTORE OCCSP FUNDING

To safeguard the future of American organic farming, we urge Congress to take immediate action to restore funding for the OCCSP. An allocation of \$11 million is needed in the upcoming appropriations process or the next Farm Bill to fully cover the rising costs of certification, accounting for inflation. This modest investment will provide crucial support to organic farmers, ensuring they can continue to meet the growing consumer demand for trusted organic products.

### BEYOND COST SHARE: ADDRESSING OTHER CRITICAL ORPHAN PROGRAMS

In addition to OCCPS, two other critical "orphan programs" that support the organic sector lost funding in the recent Farm Bill Extension. These programs play a vital role in ensuring the integrity and growth of organic agriculture:

- **Organic Data Initiative (ODI):** The ODI collects essential data on organic production, markets, and trends. This data is crucial for informed decision-making by farmers, policymakers, and researchers, supporting the continued growth and development of the organic sector.
- **Organic Certification Trade and Tracking Program:** This program helps enforce organic regulations and prevent fraud, protecting both consumers and legitimate organic producers from deceptive practices. It ensures the integrity of the organic label and maintains consumer trust.

### ACTION IS NEEDED TO RESTORE THESE KEY ORGANIC PROGRAMS

We urge Congress to take the following steps:

- **Restore OCCSP Funding:** Allocate \$11 million in the upcoming appropriations process or the next Farm Bill to fully fund the Organic Certification Cost Share Program, enabling farmers to receive 100% reimbursement for their certification costs.
- **Reinstate ODI Funding:** Provide adequate funding for the Organic Data Initiative to ensure the continued collection and analysis of essential data for the organic sector.
- **Support Organic Certification Trade and Tracking Program:** Maintain and strengthen funding for this program to protect the integrity of the organic label and prevent fraud.

### INVESTING IN THE FUTURE OF ORGANIC AGRICULTURE

Investing in these key organic programs will support family farms so they can meet the growing consumer demand for healthy, sustainable food. By restoring funding for these "orphan programs," Congress can ensure the continued success of the organic sector and its vital contributions to our economy and well-being.

Photo: Soybean and Rye Intercropping, Woodlyn Acres Farm

